

**Meeting About a Proposal for a Battery Energy Storage System at Cobholden Farm.
Held on 9th June 2022 at 7.30pm at 49, Woodhouse Lane, Duloe.**

Present:

From Cambridge Power: Neil Waterson (Head of Planning) and Nicola Thornton (Senior Planning Manager)

From Staploe Parish Council: Cllr. E. Meola, Cllr. G. Meola, Cllr. V. Zwetsloot, and Cllr. P. Yockney and the Parish Clerk Lucy Crawford.

NW: Cambridge Power is part of Pigeon Investment Management based in Bury St Edmunds.

The system is designed to store electricity from the grid at peak production times and discharge it back into the grid at times of low production and high demand. This will be particularly important as we move further toward renewable energy because wind and solar generation in particular has peaks and troughs. The environmental screening opinion for the solar farm at Cobholden has been held up due to delays with the Council and there are uncertainties with regard to whether there may be sufficient capacity at Eaton Socon Substation at the current time. The battery energy storage system could help overcome this problem but it can also be developed as a stand alone project as it would not manage energy exclusively from the solar farm – it would just help manage peaks and troughs in the national power grid.

Cllr. E. Meola: rather than building lots of solar farms why not put solar panels on new homes?

NW: we are likely to need both large and small scale renewable energy projects to meet the challenge of climate change.

NW: 35GW of battery storage will be needed nationally by 2035. This proposal is for a 100MW storage facility. 50MW is typical.

Cllr. P. Yockney: why such a large facility?

NW: this is a good location as it is near a substation with capacity – hence the larger size.

Cllr. G. Meola: why doesn't UK Power Networks provide their own battery storage facility?

NW: they are not permitted to invest in battery energy storage.

Cllr. G. Meola: if we get one solar farm / battery storage site I am concerned we will get more

Cllr. V. Zwetsloot: is the solar farm viable without the battery storage facility?

NW: questions have been asked about the capacity of the substation to handle the power from the solar farm at the current time. The battery storage facility is viable on its own without the solar farm.

Cllr. G. Meola: is there likely to be further expansion?

NW: we do not anticipate further expansion because the scheme size is restricted by capacity at the sub station and will be designed to minimise impacts but they cannot make guarantees that it won't expand in the future.

The site will be set back from the Bushmead Road and the tallest structures (eg. the 5-6m transformer) will be in a hidden part of the site with landscaping used for screening. The batteries will be 3m tall. There may be a low hum but it is sufficiently far from residential properties not to have an impact and there is already background noise from the A1.

Cllr. P. Yockney: urged Cambridge Power to do professional noise assessments to support the plan and for the sake of transparency.

NW: when the planning application is submitted it will include a range of technical and environmental assessments including a noise impact assessment.

Cllr. E. Meola: will there be any traffic implications?

NW: the site would be unmanned but there will be regular maintenance visits. During the 12 month construction period there will be a traffic management plan.

Lucy Crawford: is there a fire risk eg. if the batteries got struck by lightning or if they overheat?

Cllr. G. Meola: concerned that this area could become a focus for further electricity generation and storage. She reiterated that new homes should be generating power using solar energy. She is concerned about the health implications of the battery storage.

NW: The system uses lithium batteries with extensive fire safety precautions and temperature monitoring. They sit on an impermeable base and they will shut down if there are any issues. Surface water runoff will be managed in the design.

Cllr. V. Zwetsloot: lots of people use the substation road and Cambridge Power will need to ensure their safety and security. Also, the prevailing wind is from the west so the noise could affect the Bushmead School and the flats on the other side of the A1.

Cllr. E. Meola: do Cambridge Power also build solar farms?

NW: they have not built any yet but plan to do so. They have one operational battery storage facility at Burwell.

Cllr. V. Zwetsloot: what is the lifespan of the batteries?

NW: 40 years

Lucy Crawford: who is responsible for decommissioning?

NW: Cambridge Power as leaseholder. This is also a requirement of the Lease Agreement

Lucy Crawford: will there be an ESCROW account of funds set aside for decommissioning in case Cambridge Power goes into administration?

NW: Cambridge Power are responsible for decommissioning and build the cost into the scheme but there is not necessarily an ESCROW account.

Cllr. E. Meola: how is the project designed and does it exceed the regulated standards set by government?

NW: there are currently no UK regulations for these facilities but Cambridge Power follow established industry best practice based on EU and US Regulations.

Cllr. V. Zwetsloot: how long has Cambridge Power been in operation?

NW: 2.5 years but Pigeon has been in place since 2007.

Cllr. G. Meola: what are Cambridge Power's unique selling points?

NW: their commitment to sustainability, achieving net zero, achieving biodiversity net gain exceeding the required 10%. They pride themselves on wider sustainability benefits such as increasing biodiversity.

Cllr. V. Zwetsloot: how will the site benefit our parish?

NW: there will be planting to screen it from the footpath and improved biodiversity and they can support environmental and social policies that benefit the local community providing they contribute towards achieving net zero.

Lucy Crawford: we need money to rebuild our village hall. This won't contribute to net zero as it is a new building but it is what we need. Lots of grants available for contributing to net zero but if you need a new building there is very little available.

Cllr. E. Meola: the solar farm on the A1 was going to plant lots of biodiversity but it all died and no one can contact the owners. Lots of solar farms go bust.

Cllr. P. Yockney: could you be proud of Burwell.

NT: Yes, Burwell is an excellent site. Councillors would be welcome to visit.

Cllr. G. Meola: will you secure more land than the proposed site?

NW: The application site includes significant areas for landscaping and biodiversity similar to the Burwell site where they needed extra land to play with for all the landscaping